



# Missouri Division of Tourism Calendar Year 2014 Marketing Plan

# **Missouri Division of Tourism**

## **2014 Calendar Year Marketing Plan**

### **INTRODUCTION**

As the official destination marketing organization charged with promoting Missouri as a leisure travel destination, the Missouri Division of Tourism (MDT) plans and implements a wide variety of marketing and strategic sales initiatives. Our goal is to deliver the right message, through the right medium, to the right audience, at the right time, in order to maximize the economic impact of travel to the Show-Me State.

The majority of MDT marketing efforts are focused on the domestic leisure traveler, which includes visits to friends and relatives as well as trips taken for family fun, cultural enrichment, outdoor recreation, sports & gaming activities and nightlife & entertainment. A person-trip is defined as one person on a trip away from home overnight in paid accommodations, or on a day or overnight trip to places 50 miles or more, one-way, away from home.

The 2014 Marketing Plan is the strategic roadmap that will guide the efforts of MDT and has been designed to highlight the benefits that mean the most to the largest potential universe of customers. The goal is to implement a competitively funded program, and provide the required manpower and marketing resources to achieve success.

This marketing plan also represents a shift from a fiscal year approach to a calendar year approach. While the fiscal year ends on June 30<sup>th</sup> each year, the State's tourism campaign – both creative and media planning – spans the entire summer, and so aligning the marketing plan with the calendar year is a better reflection of how the State plans and delivers marketing messages to the consumer. What follows is the 2014 Marketing Plan – covering the second half of FY14 and the first half of FY15. All future marketing plans will continue to follow this calendar year strategy.

### **THE NEW STATE TOURISM BRAND: *ENJOY THE SHOW***

Fiscal year 2013 saw the introduction of a new brand campaign for the state of Missouri – *Enjoy the Show*. Developed through consumer research and testing, the *Enjoy the Show* campaign highlights the variety of the tourism product in Missouri and equally supports the five main activity buckets which make up that variety: Arts & Culture, Outdoor, Family Fun, Nightlife & Entertainment and Sports & Gaming.

The *Enjoy the Show* campaign was a success across a number of key results. The 2013 Advertising & Public Relations Effectiveness Study indicates that, when all the elements of the 2013 campaign are included, the effort reached over 16.6 million households (+14%) and generated more than 815,000 incremental trips and \$791 million in incremental visitor spending – an increase of 29% over 2012. The 2013 return on marketing investment (advertising, public relations and social) was \$131 per each dollar spent.

In addition, the new brand position heralded variety as a differentiating reason to visit Missouri and the results showed creative delivered on this message. Through research conducted by SMARI, when asked whether the creative communicated “Missouri offers a wide variety of things to do/places to see,” our target ranked it as “excellent” -- 4.0 on a 5.0 scale.

Initial SMARI surveys said the campaign had a positive impact on trip planning behavior and attitudes on Missouri. Of those who had seen our campaign, 45% gathered info (e.g. went to VisitMO.com, requested a guide). Surveys also said consumers considered Missouri a unique destination in the Midwest with a variety of travel options and felt Missouri has something for every family member.

In order to best support the new brand campaign, the majority of media was run in Spring of 2013 and delivered a \$0.23 cost per aware HH, significantly improving on the \$0.27 of the previous year.

65% of our target audience recalled one or more campaign elements, surpassing our goal. Considering it takes time for new creative to reach peak levels of recall, these results are especially impressive. Most notable in this success is that the television campaign ranked in the top 10% of all DMO ads SMARI has ever tested.

### **LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR STRATEGIC GROWTH**

This strong foundation laid in the launch of the new brand campaign has clearly set a direction for creative executions over the next few years. While every new campaign season demands an examination of ways to adjust and optimize creative for greater effect, the high retention of the new campaign in the brand launch will allow MDT to focus in 2014 on ways to deepen our knowledge about, our connection with and our conversion of visitors to the state of Missouri. Those opportunities align with deeper analysis and appreciation of the consumer journey.

### **THE CONSUMER JOURNEY**

The traditional marketing funnel visualizes the decision-making process of moving a consumer from awareness through to purchase. Examining this process from a tourism point of view redefines the marketing funnel as the Consumer Journey, and within the consumer journey the phases also take a decidedly travel-oriented point of view moving a consumer from Dreaming to Planning to In Trip to Loyalty and, ultimately, Advocacy.

Marketing in context of the consumer journey, especially in tourism, requires a bigger picture view of how people think about travel. From a dreaming phase of wishing to travel - with or without a destination in mind - to planning an actual trip to taking the trip and then returning home, sharing their experience and beginning the process over again.

Every brand and product has always benefitted from positive word of mouth and the loyalty and advocacy of their most dedicated consumers. However, the Internet has empowered these consumers with a megaphone to become valued sources of information for each other outside of the brand-owned marketing channels. This has revolutionized the traditional marketing funnel. The brand may no longer be the dominant voice or influence in a consumer's mind. Due to saturated networks, consumers are obtaining an increasing array of recommendations, opinions and outside sources regarding travel and purchase decisions. Therefore, the brand's fans play a pivotal role in encouraging brand loyalty and advocacy. This makes the work of the brand, in encouraging the loyalty and advocacy phase of marketing within the consumer journey, a more complicated endeavor than ever.

Our target audience is at all times in some phase of the larger consumer journey of dreaming, planning, taking and sharing their next travel experience. The challenge of marketing within the consumer journey is first to appreciate that the wants and needs of a potential consumer are very different depending on where they are in this journey, and second, to accept the messages and influences in our always-on society demand vigilance in constantly evolving our understanding of how to reach them and what message to send them. To be poised for the future, significant effort in 2014 will be focused on how this new approach affects the marketing and media planning and strategy.

### **MARKETING OBJECTIVES FOR 2014**

The overriding objectives of the 2011-2013 MDT Marketing Plans was to maximize the economic impact of travel to Missouri by "enhancing the State's desirability as a visitor destination through proven marketing strategies ... and performance-based activities that demonstrate a positive ROI." Compelling campaign creative, efficient media planning, robust public relations programs and thoughtful research continue to be the cornerstones of MDT efforts to meet this main objective; however, in addition, the successful launch of the *Enjoy the Show* brand in 2013 affords the state an opportunity to focus on the evolving strategic needs of the Missouri Division of Tourism.

A strong Paid media mix with multiple touchpoints to reaching the consumer is vital to the success of Missouri tourism; however, it is the overlay and interaction of this Paid channel with the Earned, Owned and Social Channels that maximizes the state's ability to reach consumers at all phases of the consumer journey. Each of these four main channels, and the myriad of tactics within them, may offer unique and specific ways to communicate with a potential traveler within their individual consumer journey. The goal is to better understand and use these channels and thereby empower our travelers to be a part of the success of spreading the message to everyone to *Enjoy the Show*, thus increasing tourism demand.

Interactive marketing continues to be a central component of MDT's marketing plan. Increasingly, digital strategies such as SEM, SEO and Social Media are becoming intertwined. The higher the quality of content, the more people that are sharing content,

and therefore the higher activity in search and the higher placement within search results. We will continue to develop innovative and creative online programs with a clear return on investment. This includes a thorough review of our optimization resources and an evaluation of what other areas might be more lucrative for optimization efforts. We will develop stronger digital strategies to reach consumers early and inspire new travel before the consideration phase. Search is a key resource for travelers, making it an essential channel for MDT. We will build on the growing brand awareness highlighting the diversity of the tourism product in Missouri to become a regional tourism market leader, optimizing our market potential from persuasion to conversion to increase travel to Missouri.

The following objectives for 2014 are vital to positioning Missouri as a leader in the tourism industry, and will provide valuable data that will both help us better understand our current consumer and inform strategy on how to increase travel to the state and generate higher tourism revenue.

**In support of maximizing the economic impact of travel in the Show-Me State, the 2014 marketing objectives are:**

- Objective 1)** Enhance the State's desirability as a visitor destination through proven marketing strategies
- Objective 2)** Strengthen and advance the State's marketing infrastructure
- Objective 3)** Deploy performance-based marketing activities that demonstrate a clear and positive ROI
- Objective 4)** Expand the strategy and offerings of cooperative marketing and identify new partnership opportunities
- Objective 5)** Develop medium and long range three and five year plans to develop infrastructure responsive to the evolving tourism marketplace and position Missouri on the national stage

## **OBJECTIVE #1**

Enhance the State's desirability as a visitor destination through proven marketing strategies

### **GOALS**

1. Solidify and advance the *Enjoy the Show* brand message across Paid, Earned, Owned and Social channels to build consistency in consumer perception
2. Manage the campaign activity supporting the five activity buckets independently in order to respond to changing consumer interests, growth opportunities and budget fluctuations between fiscal years
3. Integrate loyalty and advocacy content created by consumers into the brand campaign
4. Maintain Missouri in Top 15 states for visitation

### **Consumer Journey Point of View**

The efforts related to using proven marketing strategies to enhance the State's desirability as a visitor destination are most applicable to the Dreaming phase of the consumer journey. Dreaming is innately connected to awareness and how the messages consumers receive inspire them to choose Missouri as a destination and enter into a Planning phase. At the same time, it is also vital to understand how enhancing the State's desirability as a destination informs and influences the consumers in a loyalty or advocacy phase. Empowering these people with a deeper and more personalized understanding of the *Enjoy the Show* brand will help insure that the word of mouth they initiate in their personal conversations echo the marketing messages presented through the State's Paid, Earned, Owned and Social channels.

### **Tactics**

- Build on the momentum of the successful new brand launch

The *Enjoy the Show* logo, tagline and creative campaign launched in 2013 will continue in 2014. *Enjoy the Show* will be used in all marketing messaging, encouraging visitors to experience the wide variety of tourism assets that our state offers. The creative campaign focuses on the five distinct activity buckets – Arts & Culture, Outdoor, Family Fun, Nightlife & Entertainment and Sports & Gaming – that have been identified as travel motivators and are closely tied to the top revenue generators for the state in terms of SIC code classification: Eating/Drinking places, Hotels, Commercial Sports and Amusement.

The intention at the current budget level is to equitably represent the five activity buckets in order to reinforce the underlying brand message of variety. However should resources and budgets grow during the transition into a new fiscal year, then additional resources could be placed into a specific activity bucket(s). These added resources would be used to identify additional, targeted demographic and psychographic segments of potential consumers – such as couples, intergenerational families and ethnic audiences – creating niche marketing opportunities as an extension of the existing campaign.

All brand creative will be strategically delivered to each target market based on research that helps us define which markets are most receptive to which specific activity message. A brand style guide has been developed as a reference for internal and external audiences to build consistency and accuracy in use of the new logo and tagline. In 2014, the brand strategy for *Enjoy the Show* will continue to evolve in social media and public relations efforts through a brand messaging guide covering the positioning of the brand's voice, tone and keywords.

- Use imagery which appeals to the broadest possible audience

Given the unique role destination marketers have in travel to connect cultures, it is important for MDT to embrace the current global and diverse marketplace. MDT is committed to creating a diverse and inclusiveness framework that is holistic and sustainable, focusing on an “inside-out” approach. In this context, diversity includes age, race, ethnicity, gender, physical ability, sexual orientation, as well as religion, work experience, personal habits, geo location, parental status, income, appearance, marital status, etc.

To attract diverse and inclusive audiences through our integrated marketing, sales and promotional efforts, we must examine the various traveller preferences, motivations, attitudes, spending patterns, and behaviors on leisure trips and how these diverge from the total leisure travel population. As resources allow, segmentation analysis is necessary to identify the print, online, and broadcast media sources that are influential in these individuals' leisure travel planning stages. In addition, a thorough examination of topics of interest, awareness and attraction to various culture and heritage destinations, lodging, and other travel service providers will provide additional opportunities for MDT to welcome new and repeat visitors to Missouri.

MDT will continue to pursue the acquisition of quality photo and video assets to use in the marketing and promotion of Missouri as a tourist destination. This is an important tool in showcasing what Missouri has to offer, and generating interest in travel to and within the state.

- Develop content and campaigns specifically targeting loyalty and advocacy within social media

Specifically because social media provides the platform for viral word of mouth, it is the predominant focus of marketing efforts aimed at inspiring and empowering loyalty and advocacy. MDT's social platforms are compromised of individuals who have opted in to receive communication from the state and who have chosen to engage directly with the marketing messages MDT produces.

MDT will cultivate a grassroots, creative/social-driven and people-oriented brand advocacy that inspires fans to share Missouri's “Enjoy the Show” message with their networks, increasing reach and engagement for the State's social media accounts.

- Pursue appropriate group travel and international marketing opportunities

**Groups:** The packaged travel market includes traditional group tours and affinity market trips such as student, reunion, bank travel clubs, religious travel groups and military groups. While the group market comprises a small percentage of visitation to the state, it remains a viable opportunity for the Division. Traditionally, MDT has targeted this segment through participation in shows that allowed interaction with professional travel planners, including group tour operators, receptives, group leaders and bank travel clubs. MDT's participation in these shows has particularly benefitted many of the state's smaller destinations that could not afford to attend on their budgets. MDT collects the leads from these planners and distributes them to its statewide constituents.

In 2014, MDT will explore adding more proactive outreach to the program through a sales support position. MDT's contracted vendor would continue to attend shows and maintain state relationships with travel trade professionals, while the new sales support staff would begin developing those same relationships through outreach methods that allow for more year-round interaction. This collaboration would allow for Missouri to be more prominently positioned in this market.

Additionally, it is time to look at conducting research into this market, which traditionally has been difficult to track. MDT will need to examine the future of this market as it pertains to the Division's marketing goals.

- Support the Missouri industry by participation in the American Bus Association convention being held in St. Louis in January 2015 and working with destinations, attractions and lodging properties to ensure that Missouri is top of mind during the show in St. Louis and during the subsequent year's show in Louisville, KY in January 2016
- Develop and conduct research into the current effectiveness of the state's participation in group tour marketing
- Based on research, participate in trade shows targeting group travel, such as ABA, NTA, OMCA, SYTA and other shows as they meet the state's needs
- Develop fresh, educational and fun travel itineraries
- Develop familiarization trips to expose professional travel planners to new tourism assets
- Plan sales missions to reach out to professional travel planners
- Maintain and update database of travel planners
- Develop regular communications to travel planners
- Develop, maintain and update group website and collateral materials
- Continue to update and augment the VisitMO.com page aimed at professional travel planners
- Continue to work with the Missouri tourism industry to host travel trade and group tour media site visits

- Continue regional partnerships to create marketing opportunities such as Grand Central USA, an organization comprised of Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Kansas

**International Marketing:** MDT is partnering with the travel industry to leverage the power of travel. With the collective efforts of Brand USA, the U.S. Department of Commerce Travel and Tourism Advisory Board, the U.S. Travel Association, and our Missouri industry partners we are striving to bring more international inbound travel to Missouri.

Brand USA (BUSA) plays a unique role as the nation's first cooperative destination marketing organization – focusing its efforts on delivering programs and platforms that increase awareness and enhance the image of the United States among worldwide travelers in order to increase intent to travel to the United States and, most importantly, visitation and spend.

Largely due to budget, MDT has maintained a limited presence in the international market, focused primarily on Canada. With the increased efforts of BUSA to market the USA globally, MDT can continue to attract international travelers with limited budget dollars.

BUSA reports in its FY14 business plan that following its campaigns during 2012, intent to travel is up 22 percent from Canada; 14 percent from Japan and 12 percent from the United Kingdom. MDT also has acquired research from VISA VUE which provided 2012 information on our international visitation. As expected, Canada remains our number one country of origin, followed by the UK, China, Mexico, Brazil, Australia, Germany Japan, France and South Korea.

While budget does not allow MDT to proactively market in each of these countries, BUSA partnership opportunities will raise Missouri's profile and increase our awareness among travelers. MDT has made significant commitments to support the international marketing of Missouri through its partnership with BUSA. In 2014, Missouri will be participating in the Brand USA Inspiration Guide (print and digital), as well as an integrated multimedia campaign targeting Eastern and Western Canada and establishing an enhanced presence with high quality, native language content on the Brand USA website for Missouri and thirteen in-state partners.

BUSA promotes around four pillars, Culture, Indulgence, Urban Excitement and Great Outdoors, which align well with Missouri's product. Through the 2014 MDT/MO tourism industry/BUSA program, Missouri's content on the Discover America website will be greatly enhanced and a stronger focus on marketing in Canada in 2014 will feature targeted newspaper, digital and email messaging. Other outreach efforts in this market, including sales mission trips and familiarization trips, will be evaluated.

Route 66, also known as the Mother Road, resonates with many international travelers, who may not know much else about the interior of the country. Anecdotally, MDT staff is

aware of the international interest in Route 66 as four official Missouri Welcome Centers lay along the route and those staff members regularly interact with travelers, particularly Europeans from France and Germany.

In 2014, BUSA will produce five great American Road Trips, including the iconic Mother Road, with National Geographic. Andrew Evans, contributing editor to National Geographic Traveler and Digital Nomad will travel Route 66 and produce daily blogs, photo galleries and videos.

Another potential opportunity to reach the international market is through a potential partnership in TravelSouth. This organization offers opportunities to work collaboratively with other states and destinations to promote regional travel to inbound international visitors, such as the BUSA/Travel South Canadian marketing campaign which uses integrated media, digital storytelling and collaboration with Discover America Committee Canada and Travel Media of Canada (TMAC).

Opportunities also exist through the State of Missouri Department of Economic Development to carry our messages to appropriate markets. DED plans trade missions which are led by the Governor and maintains Missouri Trade and Investment offices in Missouri's top markets for international visitation.

Missouri's universities attract top caliber international students. Many of those student's families come to visit for extended periods of times. Those students and their families should be encouraged to explore the rest of the state while they are here. International students could be great ambassadors to their home countries.

Traditionally, MDT has reached out to international travelers through trade shows. This outreach will continue in 2014 through participation in U.S. Travel's IPW and other shows as appropriate. Missouri is represented at JATA, a show targeting Japanese travelers, through its membership in Mississippi River County, which is a consortium of the 10 states along the Mississippi River that market their river heritage.

- Partner with DMOs on Eastern Canada Brand USA campaign, which includes newspaper, digital and email marketing
- Participate with the Visit USA Canada committee and the US Commercial service to plan Canada sales mission for second half of calendar year 2014 (FY15) and explore possibility of familiarization tour for professional Canadian travel planners
- Investigate partnership opportunities for Canadian outreach with St. Louis Blues NHL Hockey team
- Participate in IPW and encourage other destinations to attend on their own or come into Missouri's booth as a partner
- Research value of participating in TravelSouth partnership opportunities, including sales missions and trade shows
- Research translating VisitMo.com into Spanish, German, Portuguese, Japanese, Chinese and Korean

- Encourage Missouri DMOs and tourism attractions to consider translating their collateral materials as well
- Use DED international offices in selected markets as a place to make information available; supply with Travel Guides
- Explore student ambassador program for international students at state's universities
- Encourage tourism-related businesses to participate in the Governor's trade missions as appropriate (March 3-6, 2014 trip to Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa)

## **OBJECTIVE #2**

Strengthen and advance the State's marketing infrastructure

### **GOALS**

1. Increase campaign attribution data
2. Enhance digital campaign conversions
3. Deepen integration of content strategy across marketing channels
4. Use data to optimize media plan in context of the consumer journey
5. Use data-driven consumer understandings to develop campaign creative most likely to motivate travel

### **Consumer Journey Point of View**

The objective of strengthening and advancing the State's marketing infrastructure will provide the State with data to better understand how marketing channels are reaching consumers in the various phases of the consumer journey. That information then creates the benchmarks for future campaigns and informs how creative campaigns will be developed.

### **Tactics**

- Track and Analyze Campaign Referrals to VisitMO.com

One of the most important goals in 2014 is to expand our efforts in tagging and tracking referral sources to our owned channels and then using that attribution to better understand what types of content are most relevant to consumers based on where and how they reached Missouri tourism content.

The primary focus is VisitMO.com because it is the most advertised destination across our campaign. The goal is to understand as much as possible which source of information drove the consumer to VisitMO.com whether that is a paid advertisement – and specifically which ad – or a link from our social channels, blog, email or other media outlet.

VisitMO.com uses Google Analytics to gather data related to traffic and activity on the website. Using UTM codes within inbound links to VisitMO.com will allow Google Analytics to segment traffic to the website according to the inbound referral source, and then – as discussed later in this document – the aggregate activity and actions taken by

consumers on VisitMO.com as grouped by referral source will provide a powerful set of data to help optimize the website and the content we create in the future.

- Develop complementary Search Engine Optimization and Search Engine Marketing strategies

Search Engine Optimization and Search Engine Marketing, or SEO and SEM respectively, are the two components of driving consumers to VisitMO.com utilizing the results they see displayed when they use search engines to find content online. SEO is the process of optimizing the content – both visible and invisible within the code of the site – to be organically searched and indexed by search engines so that it naturally appears in the search results. SEM is the process of purchasing popular and/or relevant search keywords so that a search display ad appears in context of the rest of the organic search results.

Both SEO and SEM are built on understanding what keywords a consumer naturally thinks to use when looking for content and balancing that with what keywords and page structures search engines are technically looking for in order to display results. The combination of the two factors leads to the search results which then need to utilize page names, links and copy to reinforce in the mind of the consumer that the information is relevant, valuable and trustworthy in order to generate a click. It's best summed up as the intent of the consumer, the requirements of the search engine and the projected credibility and validity of the search results to that original consumer intent.

Focusing on SEO and SEM strategy in 2014 requires an examination of content creation practices and aligning a strategy to best identify keywords within that content which can be highlighted in SEO and SEM. These two techniques should work seamlessly together both reinforcing strengths and finding ways to support each other, such as when organic search traffic is low and can benefit from paid SEM support or when organic optimization maintains placement for search terms which are cost prohibitive.

- Integrate editorial calendars to reflect a centralized publishing strategy across the State's Owned and Social channels

Editorial and publishing calendars representing email, social, paid social and blog content will be further integrated and optimized in order to facilitate long-term planning and short-term responsiveness to events, news stories and memes. This centralized editorial calendar will also assist in the communication of keyword opportunities back and forth between content creators and SEO and SEM program administrators.

- Identify, implement and report new website conversions

Tracking and analyzing campaign referrals and strengthening the frequency and relevance of displays in search through SEM and SEO are all focused on driving traffic

to VisitMO.com. The focus on website conversions in 2014 is to identify specific actions or series of actions on VisitMO.com which represent what MDT believes to be the most valuable information for a consumer depending on which stage of the consumer journey they may be in at the time. For example, offering someone in a planning stage more information about events and attractions in the area they are visiting or giving someone in the advocacy stage greater capacity to create or share content.

The goal is to better track these type of content conversions – what types of content people interact with on the website – and then overlaying that information with the referral data to better understand how the message they received which drove them to the website affected the actions they took and the content they interacted with once they came to the website. This lays the groundwork to be able to inject more messages and more targeted messages in the future with more specific ROI measurement.

- Integrate the Spotlight Blog into VisitMO.com

Currently the consumer-facing Spotlight Blog is a separate site from VisitMO.com. While this provides a number of advantages in the short-term, the long-term advantages of integrating this content within VisitMO.com dictate that focus in 2014 needs to be placed on improving the navigation between these sites and developing a larger strategy for eventually combining this content.

- Expand Email & Customer Relationship Management Initiatives

MDT will continue the successful Email and CRM program that delivers targeted email messages to travelers who have requested information. The main objective of the email marketing campaign is to create and maintain on-going relationships with consumers who are interested in traveling to and within Missouri. Emails are crafted around interests that directly tie into the five activity buckets that are the cornerstone of the variety highlighted by the *Enjoy the Show* campaign.

In addition to targeted content appealing to travelers interests, MDT will continue to feature MDT social networks and special promotions in the eblast, allowing MDT to extend its reach socially.

The email marketing program has seen solid growth over the past few years and that success warrants expanded efforts in 2014. In 2014, MDT will deploy over two million emails to consumers. Key goals for 2014 include updates to the opt-in process, introduction of the ability to update preferences for active subscribers and adoption of current best practice in the opt-out process while still gathering valuable research information.

Growing the number of leads in the email marketing database continues to be a priority for the Division in 2014. MDT will employ several methods to harvest new leads:

- Continue successful paid media lead generation program

- Include email sign-up component in all contests and promotions, including Facebook promotions
- Offer email sign-up opportunity at the Missouri State Fair
- Investigate opportunities to purchase qualified lists
- Continue to use Missouri Welcome Centers as email address collection points
- Test the use of email capture in banner ads
- Increase Welcome Center visitation

In addition to digital platforms, Missouri operates nine Official Welcome Centers -- seven at entry points of the state and two along a major interstate crossing the state from St. Louis to Joplin at the Oklahoma border -- which represent a key component of the Missouri's marketing infrastructure. Research shows that travelers who stop one of Missouri's Welcome Centers extend their stay and have increased expenditures, making them highly desirable. However, more than half of those who stop come from beyond our target markets and are not exposed to our messages. Therefore, the opportunity to grow our Welcome Center visitation is through promoting them to our target markets.

Those visitors most likely to stop at Welcome Centers are older travelers with higher incomes than our typical visitor. They are traveling without children, most likely giving them more flexibility in their itineraries. Promotions should be developed to encourage visitors to stop to refresh themselves in clean, safe environments. Our more targeted marketing, such as the e-blast program, could be an effective way to drive traffic into the centers. Additionally, the Welcome Center staff can be utilized to assist travelers with their planning through online channels. These staff members are uniquely situated to provide advice and feedback on travel plans through a concierge service.

Four of our Welcome Centers lay along the iconic Route 66, which also is a draw for international travelers. Enhanced promotion of Route 66 through Brand USA during 2014, may lead to increased travel and we want our center staff to be prepared to take advantage of that travel and direct those visitors to many other Missouri opportunities. MDT will look at ways to increase its Route 66 promotion.

- Include Welcome Centers along Route 66 in any public relations or social communications about the topic, including eblasts; include stop at Route 66-themed welcome center at Conway during filming of Andrew Evans BUSA/National Geographic program
- Create Route 66 collateral pieces – maps or brochures
- Investigate with MoDOT the possibility of adding Route 66 emblem to signage
- Plan press event around Welcome Centers during peak travel times, such as Memorial Day Weekend, National Tourism Week, Thanksgiving
- Work to increase collateral product in multiple languages

- Promote special events happening at centers through radio buys such as through MOPEP program or Learfield
- Implement social media plan for center promotion to include concierge service using staff
- Increase email address collection from center visitors through more promotion of the centers; and explore collecting addresses electronically
- Evaluate/audit centers annually to ensure they are inviting so that visitors will stay and interact with staff

### **OBJECTIVE #3**

Deploy performance-based marketing activities that demonstrate a clear and positive ROI

### **GOALS**

1. Continue to produce strong return on investment of MDT resources as measured by the 2014 Marketing & Media Effectiveness Study in terms of incremental visitation, incremental expenditures and overall ROI, as well as measures of brand awareness, perception and intent to travel that influence travel to Missouri
2. Lead the industry in focusing marketing efforts towards the goal of meeting or exceeding U.S. Travel Association's 2014 national leisure travel forecast of +1.9% growth in terms of statewide visitation and expenditures as measured by the 2014 Economic Impact of Tourism Report

### **Consumer Journey Point of View**

Integration of the consumer journey into the media planning process provides an additional consideration when creating a media plan. Targeting media with the intent of specifically reaching Dreamers, Planners, Current Travelers, Loyalists and Advocates can influence not just the creative message, but the media platform, product and partner. These decisions cannot be made in a vacuum and must weigh reach, efficiency and potential to convert; however, the consumer journey does provide an additional consideration and tool for evaluation.

### **Tactics**

- Maintain the general market share of voice

Continue to monitor advertising spend by media in each of the target markets, in order to achieve and maintain a top three share-of-voice position among its competitors.

- Place integrated and targeted media in our identified markets

The advertising plan is designed to keep Missouri top-of-mind as a destination in priority markets and to drive our target audience to VisitMO.com for more information.

SMARI research results have shown us that advertising in multiple mediums is critical to achieving maximum effectiveness. A blend of the following advertising elements will be used to promote Missouri Tourism:

- Television
- Magazines
- Online Banner Ads (includes mobile)
- Online Video Ads
- Search Text Ads
- Out-of-Home Advertising (Billboards)

**Target Audience:** In the spring of 2013, the target audience for media buying changed from Women 25-54 to Women 35-54. This adjustment was based, among other factors, on an analysis of who requests Missouri travel information. Tightening the target audience in this way allows MDT to maximize limited resources and buy media more effectively and efficiently. Additional data sources included:

- RUF Strategic Solutions, Inc. MO traveler inquirer database
- SMARI MO traveler data
- VisitMO Facebook fan profile

MDT will ensure an advertising presence in Established markets: Cedar Rapids-Waterloo & Dubuque; Champaign & Springfield-Decatur; Des Moines-Ames; Ft. Smith-Fayetteville-Springdale-Rogers; Jonesboro; Little Rock-Pine Bluff; Lincoln & Hastings-Kearney; Oklahoma City; Omaha; Paducah-Cape Girardeau-Harrisburg-Mt. Vernon; Peoria-Bloomington; Quad Cities (Davenport-Rock Island-Moline); Sioux City; Terre Haute; Topeka; Tulsa and Wichita; and in Opportunity markets: Chicago, Louisville, Memphis and Evansville.

MDT advertising will run during peak travel planning times, with the majority of activity running in the spring and summer. Additionally, a portion of MDT's social media budget will be used to support paid media during the "Shoulder seasons" which directly precede and follow peak travel times. We recognize that travel occurs year-round and this allows MDT to expand the campaign in an efficient manner. MDT will monitor weather and traffic (construction) patterns and adjust media in surrounding markets when deemed necessary to most effectively reach the segments of the audience who can feasibly visit the state.

- Identify cost savings opportunities that would allow for heavier market saturation

MDT will continue to leverage the state in its entirety at every media level possible through the co-op Media Exchange, resulting in additional revenue for the state. H&L compiles co-op partner media activity to formulate one comprehensive flowchart showcasing the efforts of all partners on behalf of the state of Missouri. Looking at the big picture makes us aware of the efforts being made by all partners to avoid

oversaturation in a market and competition between the state message and the message of Missouri CVBs and destinations. When opportunities for enhancement are found, revisions to existing plans may be made. Compiling this information has allowed H&L greater negotiating power on behalf of the state of Missouri and its partners. In the print medium, the combined volume and frequency of participating partners has been used to develop state rates so that all partners can take advantage of highly discounted rates. We will continue researching opportunities to apply this type of negotiating to additional mediums, particularly in the new CMI menu. Additional cost savings opportunities that may result in heavier market saturation that can be further supported by shared media missions and joint promotions with Missouri tourism industry partners.

- Increase media focused social media conversion and engagement

The importance of social media is well documented previously in this document; especially as an extension of efforts aimed at loyalty and advocacy. Placing paid media creative within social platforms for the purpose of growing the State's social communities and increasing engagement with those communities is a necessary effort to supporting greater word of mouth and share of voice.

- Expand the email marketing program specific to banner advertising and featured deals

MDT provides the opportunity for partners to participate within MDT's emails through banner advertising. This not only provides additional exposure for partners, but reporting shows that consumers view this as valuable added content. Additionally, the State has instituted Featured Deals emails that include exclusive and valuable offers to motivate travel to the State and enhance the profile of the email campaign overall with consumers. Both of these initiatives will be expanded in 2014.

- Identify and continue successful communications and earned media activities

As referenced earlier in this marketing plan, the 2013 SMARI Advertising and PR Effectiveness Report, reported that public relations awareness for CY 13 had increased by 14%. This is a significant achievement in brand reach. To continue to keep the Missouri brand top of mind with consumers, brand awareness (total reach) and the cost effectiveness of achieving that reach will continue to be a top priority.

As MDT continues to dive more deeply into consumer habits and a greater understanding of the sales cycle, earned media efforts will also be more formally aligned with stages of the consumer journey. Earned media efforts will focus on specific stages such as loyalty and advocacy which occur beyond brand awareness and deeper within the sales cycle.

Earned media (public relations) and social media have been linked, particularly within the yearly advertising effectiveness study, and are assessed for success together rather than separately. However, in CY 14, the first steps will be taken to separate the medias

(earned and social) so they can be evaluated separately within the yearly effectiveness study. Separating the medias will provide a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of each media and why/how consumers use each media within the sales cycle of the consumer journey.

A formal strategy for earned media is attached to this marketing plan. Specific public relations objectives include:

- Compliment the 2014 advertising campaign with consistent messaging that creates greater awareness and a universal perception of the Missouri brand
- Promote the message of the Missouri brand to the most relevant content publishers who will spread that message and advocate for the brand
- Continue to put efforts into successful and forward-thinking measurement practices in earned media/social media
- Encourage the Missouri tourism industry to participate in promoting the state through active relationships and the sharing of best practices

These efforts will align with the thrust of this marketing plan and contribute to achieving objectives aligned with online traffic and conversions.

#### **OBJECTIVE #4**

Expand the strategy and offerings of cooperative marketing and identify new partnership opportunities

#### **GOALS**

1. Revise the state's cooperative marketing program to provide greater fiscal accountability for the state while still providing flexible support for DMOs
2. Maximize the impact of Missouri's marketing resources

#### **Consumer Journey Point of View**

The consumer journey recognizes that there are a myriad of influences on the Dreaming, Planning, In Trip, Loyalty and Advocacy phases. Cooperative marketing and partnership expands the reach of MDT and multiplies the opportunities to reach consumers and influence their decision-making. Additionally, the partnerships provide strength through association so that word of mouth is positively influenced by the implicit endorsement that comes from trusted partners aligning with each other.

#### **Tactics**

- Launch the Promote Missouri Fund

One of the most significant commitments to expanding strategic cooperative marketing and partnership in 2014 is tied to updates of MDT's cooperative marketing program, the Promote Missouri Fund (PMF). PMF is designed to continue to provide matching grant funds to DMOs for approved leisure travel marketing while introducing two additional aspects of the program – Collective Marketing Initiatives (CMI) and Marketing Platform

Development (MPD). CMIs are select media opportunities, negotiated by MDT with media partners and offered to DMOs. These CMI opportunities will allow the state to stand together for greater collective benefit. MPDs are projects requiring a one-time grant of funds to support development of marketing collateral or research, which has multi-year benefit to the DMO.

Launching in FY15 (July 1, 2014), the PMF has also streamlined administration making the application process easier. Full details of the PMF are included in the cooperative marketing guidelines.

- Highlight the Missouri Film Commission

As part of the Missouri Division of Tourism, the Missouri Film Commission presents another opportunity to expand cooperative marketing and partnership. For example, the premiers of movies set or filmed in Missouri (such as *Gone Girl* filmed in Cape Girardeau) provide opportunities for public relations and social media efforts to capture attention. Further, the launch of the *Enjoy the Show* brand in 2013 provides a template for refreshing the look and feel of some of the MO Film Commission's marketing materials, specifically the website and newsletter. The website and newsletter will be updated to enhance the design elements, restructure navigation and make a number of needed technical updates.

- Pursue State Agency Partnerships

Another focus of partnership in 2014 will be identifying new cooperative marketing opportunities between state agencies. Through regular communication with these agencies, MDT hopes to identify marketing, tradeshow and public relations opportunities to pool resources and offer more unified messages to the consumer.

Missouri's broad offerings in outdoor recreation create a natural target audience in outdoor enthusiasts. With 87 state parks and historic sites, and more than 200,000 acres available to the public, the outdoor tourism product in the state is a highly relevant topic for the Missouri Division of Tourism to promote.

MDT will continue to work with Missouri State Parks, The Missouri Department of Conservation, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, advocacy groups, and the private sector to stay current with the goals and missions of these organizations, and to effectively coordinate efforts to promote the state's outdoor assets.

In conjunction with marketing efforts mentioned above, MDT will:

- Work with Missouri State Parks on a joint presence at the Travel & Adventure Tradeshow in Chicago, the Kansas City RV Show, the Midwest Fish and Wildlife Conference in Kansas City, and other events of mutual interest in order to increase visitation from select states as determined in the MSP marketing plan

- Target outdoor travel writers and bloggers through earned media efforts in order to garner news articles and feature stories in outdoor-specific publications
- Feature state parks, conservation areas and outdoor recreation activities (hunting, fishing, hiking, biking, etc.) on VisitMO.com, within VisitMO social media channels, the Missouri Travel Guide, Missouri Tourism email blasts and MDT's general market advertising campaign
- Participate in MOPEP program with a seasonal targeted message for state parks (e.g. trout season and fishing in 1<sup>st</sup> quarter; golfing in 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter; fall foliage and hiking in 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, etc.)

Similarly, Missouri's vast agricultural product offers many opportunities from farm visits, to u-pick operations and farmers markets to wine country getaways. As more and more people live in urban and suburban areas, their connections with the land become more distant and educational opportunities arise as well. MDT will continue to work collaboratively with agencies such as the Missouri Wine and Grape Board, the Department of Agriculture's AgriMissouri and the Missouri Beef Council as well as others to proactively promote these opportunities.

- Identify individuals who can represent the State either through the *Enjoy the Show* campaign or privately as influencers within their own networks

Highly regarded individuals in the Loyalty and Advocacy phase are some of the most powerful influencers on word of mouth. Identifying and working with these individuals not only expands the reach of the State's marketing, but provides added legitimacy as well.

In addition to identifying new individuals, MDT looks forward to:

- Continuing partnership with professional fisherman Scott Pauley in order to reach outdoor enthusiasts in their own environment. Pauley will continue to act as an outdoor recreation spokesperson on behalf of MDT to promote hunting and fishing
- Continuing to collaborate with well-known travel writer Tom Uhlenbrock to amplify the Missouri message. Uhlenbrock will contribute articles, blog entries and photos to help populate VisitMO.com, travel writer pitches, and news releases
- Pursue Private Sector Partnerships

In 2014 MDT will pursue opportunities for private sector partnership in a number of ways. This may include co-branded media placements with organizations whose goals and mission align with MDT, for example, partnering with the Missouri Beef Council to jointly promote culinary tourism. Another strategy is to seek prizeing and promotion administration for sweepstakes and contests from hotels, restaurants and attractions. Through this promotion strategy, all partners would contribute to co-branded paid media alongside messaging within their own social and owned channels. Finally, MDT will

seek out potential merchandise opportunities for the *Enjoy the Show* brand as trademarks are finalized to provide MDT those rights.

## **OBJECTIVE #5**

Develop medium and long range three and five year plans to develop infrastructure responsive to the evolving tourism marketplace and position Missouri on the national stage

### **GOALS**

1. Examine the travel landscape and the changing consumer wants and needs
2. Analyze how trends in branded content consumption will affect MDT's marketing strategy and align MDT's resources to be flexible to respond to evolving needs
3. Evaluate how new media products and opportunities are changing the current assumptions about media mix and media markets and create a plan for evolving media planning

### **Consumer Journey Point of View**

The consumer journey represents a new approach in how to align marketing efforts and evaluate the success of those efforts. Significant effort in 2014 is tied to benchmarking the consumer journey for future growth and identifying more ways in which a commitment to the consumer journey can be tactically carried out. Long-range planning is vital to grounding efforts in the short term and creating a roadmap for how the State will support targeting consumers in their journey in the long-term.

### **Tactics**

- Institute new research initiatives

MDT will be examining a number of potential research initiatives in 2014 and beyond which will focus on not only enhancing our understanding of awareness and effectiveness of paid media, but also the usability of VisitMO.com and the evolving role of social media, public relations and the Welcome Centers in MDT's overall marketing campaigns, especially as it applies to the consumer journey. This is all done to better understand the needs of today's traveler and what they want and expect specifically from a state marketing campaign.

- Develop integrated social content production

MDT has established social pages in Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Pinterest. These platforms are constantly evolving requiring consistent examination of strategies and best practices to maximize their benefit to Missouri tourism. Additionally, these platforms require a consistent stream of new content. A focus in 2014 will be creating the infrastructure necessary to support the content demands -- copy, photography, video and community management -- of social media into the future.

- Ask deeper media questions about markets, media consumption patterns and efficiencies

The brand launch in 2013 increased media efficiency nearly 15% over the previous year. The long range planning in 2014 as it pertains to media will examine whether this efficiency should be the paramount goal going forward or whether pursuing some targeted, higher priced media executions to specific consumer segments may yield long-term ROI benefits. Additionally, MDT will re-examine established markets and media mix with an eye to how planning may evolve over the next several years.

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